DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 538 CS 213 710

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TITLE Revise, Resubmit, and Succeed.
PUB DATE Oct 92
NOTE 5p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (78th, Chicago, IL, October 29-November 1, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Editors; *Faculty Publishing; Higher Education; Peer Evaluation; *Revision (Written Composition); *Scholarly Journals; *Writing for Publication
IDENTIFIERS *Scholarly Writing

ABSTRACT

Rarely does an author's first submission to a scholarly journal get accepted for publication with few or no revisions. But authors should realize that requests for revisions are in fact grounds for encouragement. Also, authors should be aware that their revision may not be totally acceptable, and they may have to make some more revisions. A veteran editor discusses ways writers can constructively respond to the following 10 frequent comments from reviewers and editors: (1) the submission does not add to the discipline; (2) the author has overlooked a body of previous research; (3) inappropriate subjects (people) were used; (4) not enough subjects were used; (5) the method used was not appropriate for the questions posed; (6) the results do not support the conclusions; (7) something is wrong with the statistics; (8) the paper is poorly organized; (9) certain parts are unclear; and (10) the paper is too long, too redundant, or laced with unnecessary parts. Authors should start revising before a week has passed and complete revisions as soon as possible. They should also write a letter detailing how they addressed the concerns of editors and reviewers. Unless authors get an unqualified, absolute "no," they are on their way to publication. (RS)

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REVISE, RESUBMIT, AND SUCCEED

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Presented at the 1992 Convention of the
Speech Communication Association
Chicago

One of the most crucial times in your attempt to get your work published in a journal comes when you receive the responses from the journal editor and the reviewers. I think it is crucial because here is where some authors-to-be give up unnecessarily. During my three years as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Massachusetts Journal of Communication* and the several years I have served on the editorial boards of national and regional journals I have tried to make this a transitional step for an author's publishable work rather than the "end of the line." I offer ten common comments from reviewers and one or more ways in which you can respond to these comments.

Rarely does an author's first submission get accepted for publication with few or no revisions. Unless you receive an unqualified, absolute "no," you are on your way to publication. Also, be aware that your revision may not be totally accepted either, and you may have to make some more revisions. The following are ten frequent comments from reviewers and editors:

Comment 1: This submission does not add to our discipline.

Your response: Go back to your references and expand your initial literature search for more information. See if there is a lack of consensus about any aspect that appears in your work. Zero in on that lack of consensus, dovetail your approach to that

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discrepancy, and explain how your work supports one of the conflicting viewpoints in the literature. If your search does not turn up a lack of consensus, take a slightly different approach: point out the ways in which your work extends and/or enlarges what has already been accomplished.

Comment 2: There is a body of previous research that you have not included.

Your response: Do a more thorough literature search. Your institution can probably do this overnight via computer. Consider adding new key words for this search (the reviewers' comments can supply some).

Comment 3: You didn't use appropriate subjects (people).

Your response: Since all too often faculty researchers use their own readily available students, this can be a valid criticism. Whomever you may have used, it is too late to change this aspect of your work. Instead, try to point out the salient and relevant characteristics of your subjects (perhaps that they are members of the large middle class). In doing so, you may need to revise your introduction and conclusion.

Comment 4: You didn't use enough subjects.

Your response: Call it a pilot program or project. Be sure to add the appropriate caveats and limitations to your conclusions.

Comment 5: Your method isn't appropriate for the question(s) you posed in your introduction.

Your response: Revise your question(s). It's easier to do this than to redo your project. You will probably need to revise your conclusion as well. A second approach you can take is to find

examples (if you can) of other similar studies that have used your method. Cite these studies and incorporate their rationale into your description of your methods.

Comment 6: Your results don't support your conclusion(s).

Your response: Revise your conclusion(s) and take a more realistic perspective.

Comment 7: Something is wrong with your statistics.

Your response: Recheck them yourself and ask a statistically proficient colleague to help.

Comment 8: Your paper is poorly organized.

Your response: Often the reviewers will offer useful suggestions for revising. Ask a colleague to help or at least to read and respond to your revision. Before moving on to the next comment, I want to say that the comment, "Your paper is poorly organized," is one that you don't want to allow to happen. Organization is something that can be and should be polished before the initial submission. The same is true for accuracy in grammar and spelling. Be sure to use the Spell Checker provided by your word processing program.

Comment 9: Certain parts are unclear.

Your response: Get a colleague to read, react, and advise. Use this advice for revising.

Comment 10: It is too long, too redundant, or laced with unnecessary parts.

Your response: Cut them.

In addition to these suggestions, I want to add three pieces of advice. First, when you get the reviewers' comments, start

revising before a week has passed and complete your revision as soon as possible. Revising the same day that you receive the comments is probably not a good idea. Most of us need a day or two to put the comments in perspective. Second, when you submit your revision (or any future revisions) write a letter detailing how you addressed the editor's and reviewers' concerns. Third, don't get discouraged. After all, you didn't get no for an answer, you got suggestions for improvement. Revise, resubmit, and succeed!